

**Testimony of  
Congressman Mac Thornberry  
Hearing of the Select Committee on Homeland Security  
July 16, 2002**

Mr. Chairman,

I appreciate the opportunity to appear today before the Select Committee on Homeland Security.

As you know, I've spent a good bit of time working on this issue over the past 16 months. Clearly, there have been a number of changes in the world since I introduced my first homeland security bill in March of 2001.

One thing that has not changed – and, indeed, one thing that has become all too obvious – is that America and Americans are increasingly vulnerable to a broadening array of threats from a variety of areas and actors around the world.

Ten years ago, Operation Desert Storm showed us it is foolhardy to hit us where we are strong. September 11<sup>th</sup> showed us our enemies are actively searching for ways to strike us where we are weak.

Over the past several years, there have been a number of reports and studies that detailed just how vulnerable we are. In January 2001, for example, the bipartisan Commission on National Security/21st Century -- better known as the Hart-Rudman Commission -- issued a report in which it found that:

“The combination of unconventional weapons proliferation with the persistence of international terrorism will end the relative invulnerability of the U.S. homeland to catastrophic attack. A direct attack on American citizens on American soil is likely over the next quarter century. The risk is not only death and destruction but also demoralization that could undermine U.S. global leadership.”

We have often heard about the dangers associated with nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons being smuggled into this country. But we could also be devastated by computer attacks against our critical infrastructure or by livestock and plant diseases being introduced into our food supply.

Let me give you one fact that caught my attention. Every day \$8.8 billion of goods, 1.3 million people, 58,000 shipments, and 340,000 vehicles enter our country. But the Customs Service is only able to inspect a small fraction of them. The volume of U.S. trade has doubled since 1995, and some expect it to double again in the next five years.

And yet, by every account, we are not doing enough to protect our citizens. The Hart-Rudman Commission found, “[i]n the face of this threat, our nation has no coherent or integrated governmental structures.”

A July 1999 report by the Commission to Assess the Organization of the Federal Government to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction concluded that “a cardinal truth of government is that policy without proper organization is effectively no policy at all. If the Federal Government’s policy is to combat the threat posed by the spread of weapons of mass destruction, then the government must be organized to do so.”

A June 2000 study by the National Commission on Terrorism echoed this conclusion when it found that “[t]his country’s seeming inability to develop and implement a clear, comprehensive, and truly integrated national domestic preparedness strategy means that we may still remain fundamentally incapable of responding effectively to a serious terrorist attack.” The Commission also found that “the complex nature of current Federal organizations and programs makes it very difficult for state and local authorities to obtain Federal information, assistance, funding, and support.”

Homeland security is a big, complex problem. No one bill and no one branch of government can address the entire need. We need a strategy to reduce our vulnerabilities; we need appropriate funding of the efforts we make; and we need effective organizational structures.

President Eisenhower put it pretty well. He said, “the right system does not guarantee success, but the wrong system guarantees failure. A defective system will suck the leadership into its cracks and fissures, wasting their time as they seek to manage dysfunction rather than making critical decisions.”

The plan we are considering today tries to deal with part of the organizational deficiencies created by having literally dozens of agencies with some responsibility for homeland defense. The bill does not try to fix all of the problems. It does not deal with the military’s role in homeland security, for example. But it does try to force more integration, coordination, and planning so that we can “prepare for uncertainty.”

This bill would implement one of the recommendations of the Hart Rudman Commission. I think it is important to say a word about that Commission. We are all used to

commission after commission producing report after report, which simply set on a shelf somewhere. If we allow the reports of this Commission to simply set on a shelf, history will not be kind to us.

This Commission was unique in the exceptional background, experience – and I would say gravitas – of its members. Their political philosophies ranged from the left to the right. But they unanimously agreed on the nature of the threats we face and on our lack of adequate preparation, and most amazingly, they agreed on what we should do.

The plan we are considering today mirrors and builds upon the Commission's recommendations.

Under the plan:

- ✓ ***Our border and transportation security would be strengthened*** -- The plan will consolidate key border security agencies such as the Coast Guard, Customs Services, Border Patrol, INS inspectors, and USDA border inspectors under one umbrella within the new Department.
- ✓ ***Our emergency preparedness and response would be improved*** – The Federal Emergency Management Agency will be incorporated into this new department, and its existing framework will serve as the focal point for state and local communities to work with Washington in planning, preparing, and responding to a homeland threat or attack.
- ✓ ***Our intelligence and critical infrastructure defenses will be beefed up*** – The new department will act as a clearinghouse for intelligence information, supplementing the efforts of the FBI, the CIA and other intelligence agencies in analyzing and gathering data. It will also coordinate and bolster federal efforts to prevent cyber attacks.
- ✓ ***Our defenses against a chem/bio/nuclear/radiological attack will be bolstered*** – The Department would lead the federal government's efforts in this area, helping to coordinate, among other things, advancements in science and technology that will help strengthen our homeland security.

**The goal of creating this new department is not to add another layer of fat to the already bloated federal bureaucracy. Rather, the goal is to realign our government so it is better prepared to prevent and respond to homeland threats.**

Just over 50 years ago, Harry Truman called on Congress to realign the country's national security structure by creating a new Department of Defense. President Truman's vision and the plan that Congress ultimately passed laid the foundation for the defeat of communism and the victory of freedom in the Cold War. We are at a similar, pivotal

point today.

If Congress lets turf battles and jurisdictional disputes get in the way of reorganizing our government, it will have failed the American people. It is time for us to act.

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